

GOVERNOR RICHARDSON'S BLUE RIBBON WATER TASK FORCE

2005 Annual Report

December 2005

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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STATE STAFF LIAISONS

John D'Antonio
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Introduction

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force is a citizen advisory group appointed by the Governor for the purpose of advising the Governor and state agencies on issues related to water in New Mexico. Task Force members represent a diversity of viewpoints on water from around the state. The Task Force meets monthly to receive briefings on critical water concerns, visit specific locations to more fully understand complex water issues, participate in dialogue with key state agency leaders and decision-makers, and consider and make recommendations on water. The issues considered by the Task Force in 2005 are listed briefly at the end of this report; full minutes of the Task Force meetings are included on its web site, <http://eweb.lanl.gov/blueribbon.htm>.

Findings

The Task Force encourages the state to maintain its strong commitment to and funding for the priorities, goals, and objectives in the New Mexico State Water Plan, adopted by the Interstate Stream Commission in December of 2003. The main findings of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force during 2005 include the following:

- New Mexico must commit now to making the significant investments necessary to proactively manage its water resources for the general welfare of its citizens and in order to assure a stable economic environment for current and future generations.
- Adjudication of water rights in the state is a priority. Settlements are an important part of this. The state needs to follow through on commitments for Indian Water Rights Settlements. Currently, key components of the Pecos and Navajo settlements involve issues of compact compliance and need to be funded.
- The State of New Mexico needs to more effectively and efficiently manage its water resources on a sustainable basis. In order to be a strong management agency, the OSE/ISC need adequate infrastructure and staff, and the state must continue to invest in data collection and infrastructure.
- Ongoing, coordinated state-wide and regional planning is a critical aspect of ensuring long-term water supply.

Former Taos Pueblo Governor and GBRWTF Member Passes Away

We are sad to report the Allen R. Martinez passed away on December 16, 2005. Mr. Martinez was a former Governor of Taos Pueblo.

- Our state needs to be a leader in water conservation technologies. The Task Force toured farms in Southern New Mexico to observe water-conserving irrigation practices, and learned that New Mexican farmers that irrigate with ground water have to rely on expertise in other states and countries to improve water conservation.

Recommendations

Below are the 2005 **priority recommendations** by the Task Force. The Task Force supports five recommendations as the **highest priorities for action**, with eleven additional recommendations. These recommendations will be presented to Governor Richardson at a meeting in January, 2006 and distributed in written form to the Governor, State Engineer and the Director of the Interstate Stream Commission as well as to Cabinet Secretaries of the Departments of Environment, Economic Development, and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.

1. **Provide funding to convert the 37 remaining temporary staff positions in the OSE to permanent positions. The Task Force appreciates the progress made in the 2005 Legislative session in funding permanent staff positions in the OSE, and recognizes the need for continued resources to address the remaining gaps.**
2. **Provide \$18M to complete the Pecos settlement.**
3. **Continue to provide active support and resources to implement Active Water Resources Management (AWRM) and the W.A.T.E.R.S. data base.**
4. **Support a Congressional and multi-state approach to secure the necessary resources for the Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement. The Task Force also advocates the long term need for financial support for all other Indian water rights settlements.**
5. **Capitalize the Water Trust Fund.**

Additional Recommendations:

- 1. Provide resources for ESA/NEPA work to appropriately address environmental and endangered species issues.**
- 2. Support aquifer mapping and monitoring wells to measure drawdown rates and water quality.**
- 3. Support desalination projects including partnerships with GE, Sandia, and LANL.**
- 4. Provide matching funds for USGS stream gauging and groundwater monitoring stations.**
- 5. Provide funding for OSE and ISC programs related to water conservation.**
- 6. Provide continued funding for critical, ongoing programs that were funded in the past by the now depleted Trust Funds.**
- 7. Provide adequate funding to New Mexico State University to develop international expertise in water-conserving irrigation practices.**
- 8. Explore the potential impacts of a Gross Receipts Tax exemption for water conservation investments.**
- 9. Support studies of the economic benefits and rate of return on investments made in conservation technology and practices and of cost-effective incentives for conservation.**
- 10. Promote rooftop and landscape water harvesting and include them in the state water plan.**
- 11. Provide support for implementing regional water plans and the state water plan.**

2006 – A Look Ahead

During 2006, The Task Force will review and consider recommendations on issues including but not limited to the following:

- Progress on Indian Water Rights settlements;
- Implementation of the state water plan;
- Water Infrastructure and Investment Team activities;
- Strategies to further advance water conserving irrigation practices in New Mexico;
- Mutual domestic systems;
- Private domestic wells;
- Progress of the recommendations in the 2005 report.

Summary of Task Force Activities in 2005

Meetings were held in Albuquerque for a total of two half-days per month. As one of its priorities for the 2005 year, the Task Force discussed at length the importance of the settlement of the Navajo Water Rights Agreement, and formed a subcommittee to further study the issue and make recommendations to the Task Force. Task Force members also assisted the OSE/ISC with developing the scope of work for a study that is being conducted by the UNM Anderson Schools of Management on the economic benefits and impacts of construction of the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project and implementation of the Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement.

The State Engineer and Director of the Interstate Stream Commission attended meetings on a regular basis to provide the Task Force with updates on state water issues and to solicit feedback on various initiatives. The Task Force reviewed major water-related bills passed by the Legislature and made recommendations to the Governor regarding signing or vetoing those bills. One field trip was taken to the Deming area to study water-conserving irrigation and other local water issues. Some members also attended the 50th annual New Mexico Water Conference sponsored by the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute, October 18-20 in Las Cruces. Invited guests and presenters during 2005 included:

- Rick DeSimone, Tink Jackson, and Dario Rodriguez, OSE, Progress on integration of OSE functions, processes, and data management systems, with examples from Virden Valley and the La Plata section of the San Juan Project
- Judge Jerald Valentine, Lower Rio Grande Adjudication
- Judge Pro Tempore Rozier Sanchez, San Juan Stream Adjudication
- Darío Rodriguez, Rick DeSimone, Sylvia Lucero, Elizabeth Cervantes, Amy Louise, Tink Jackson, and Jim McNees, OSE/ISC, Technology Development at OSE to Support Water Rights Adjudications
- Ray Gilmore, Chairman, Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission
- Katie Gilbert, Commissioner, Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission
- Ray Benally, Director, Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources; Commissioner, Navajo Nation Water Rights Commission
- Jason John, Hydrologist, Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources
- Charlie Nylander, LANL, “Agua es Vida (Volume 1): Groundwater and Sustainability” educational video produced by the LANL Water Research Technical Assistance Office
- Oscar Larach, Storm Water and Gray Water Management
- Stephanie Moore, Daniel B. Stephens and Associates, Enhanced Aquifer Recharge Opportunities and Quantification Methods